

CHAPTER 18

Al-Kahf: The Cave

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 12 *sections*; 110 *verses*)

This chapter deals entirely with the Christian religion and the Christian nations, and that is the reason for giving it the name *The Cave*. The distinctive characteristic of Christianity is its institution of monkery, which required for its practice such corners of solitude as caves. The story of the *Dwellers of the Cave* is in fact the story of the Christian religion, whose first condition was one of dwelling in caves in perfect seclusion, but whose last condition is that of material engagements in trade and industry, hinted at in the word *raqîm* or *inscription*; see verse 9; 9a.

The last chapter is brought to a close by pointing out the error of attributing a son to the Divine Being, while that very doctrine is denounced at the commencement of this chapter, thereby clearly establishing the connection of the two. The chapter opens with a plain denunciation of the Christian doctrine of the son-ship of Jesus, and then refers to the earthly “embellishments” which hinder the Christian nations from accepting the truth; yet, we are told, it was their ancestors who cut off all worldly connections for the sake of their religion. The second and the third sections deal with a certain story of Christian youths who sought refuge in a cave, but the story has evidently beneath it a deeper significance, and contains prophetic reference to the later history of Christianity itself. The fourth section shows that true guidance is now offered in the Holy Qur’ân. The fifth illustrates in a parable that the Christians will reject the truth at first because of their greater power and wealth. The next two sections deal with the bringing of the guilty to judgment and their ultimate helplessness, while the eighth indicates how warning is disregarded when first given. The ninth and tenth sections take us back to the story of Moses, whose travels in search of knowledge make him discover a man of God superior in knowledge to himself. If the story be taken as speaking of the *Mi’raj*, or Ascension, of Moses, it may be interpreted as affording a contrast between the narrow limits of the Mosaic dispensation and the universal nature and the high ideals of the Islamic dispensation. The eleventh section speaks of Darius I, the two-horned one of Daniel’s vision, and of his great efforts against two tribes known as Gog and Magog, the real object being a

prophetical allusion to their latter-day representatives. The last section of the chapter again refers, not only to the basic doctrine of the Christian religion, but also to the great ingenuity in manufactures of the nations professing that religion, whose *effort goes astray in this world's life*, and thus draws a very true picture of the present condition of the Christian nations.

The whole of this chapter was revealed at Makkah, and, as shown in the introductory note on chapter 17, is an early Makkan revelation.

SECTION 1: A Warning to the Christians

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Praise be to Allâh! Who revealed the Book to His servant, and allowed not therein any crookedness,^a

2 Rightly directing, ^a to give warning of severe punishment from Him and to give good news to the believers who do good that theirs is a goodly reward,

3 Staying in it for ever;

4 And to warn those who say: Allâh has taken to Himself a son.

5 They have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers. Grievous is the word that comes out of their mouths. They speak nothing but a lie.

1a. In connection with this chapter, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: He who remembers the first ten verses of the chapter entitled the “Cave” is protected from the tribulation of Dajjal (Antichrist) (*Sahîh Muslim* (*Hadîth*), by Imâm Abu-l-Husain ibn Al-Hajjâj 6:42). *Shi‘bah* mentions the last ten verses of *The Cave* instead of the first ten (*Kitâb al-Sunan* (*Hadîth*), by *Abû Dâwûd* Sulaimân 36:12).

Now in the first and the last sections of this chapter the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus is condemned. In the first section a warning is given to those who say *Allâh has taken to Himself a son* (verse 4), in the last two to those who *take My servants to be friends besides Me* (verse 102), and this doctrine, the doctrine of sonship and of the divinity of a servant of God, is the basic doctrine of the Christian religion. Moreover, in the concluding ten verses, a true description of the occupation of Christian nations is given in the words *whose effort goes astray in this world's life* (verse 104). The Arabic Glorious Qur’ân does not speak of the appearance of Dajjal,

or Antichrist, anywhere but the Prophet's saying quoted above plainly shows that the Dajjal of the Hadîth is the same as the upholders of the erroneous Christian doctrine of the sonship and divinity of "Jesus Christ". Christianity, in its present form, being opposed to the true teachings of Christ, is thus the only Antichrist known to the Qur'ân. It may be added that Dajjal signifies *one who conceals the truth with falsehood*, or *a liar* or *a great deceiver* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

2a. The Qur'an is here described as possessing two qualifications. The first refers to its own perfection, *there is no crookedness in it*; and the second speaks of it as a book suited to make others perfect, for it is called *qayyim*, as meaning one that rightly directs others. Or, it is called *qayyim*, meaning *maintainer*, as regulating the affairs of men or as maintaining the spiritual truth, which indeed would have been entirely lost to the world but for its being guarded by the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân.

6 Then maybe thou wilt kill thyself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they believe not in this announcement.^a

7 Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try which of them is best in works.

8 And We shall surely make what is on it dust, without herbage.^a

9 Or, think you that the companions of the Cave and the Inscription were of Our wonderful signs?^a

6a. This verse gives us an insight into the anxiety which the Holy Prophet had on account of a fallen humanity, an anxiety so great that he is spoken of here as *almost killing himself with grief*. His was a life of absolute devotion to the cause of humanity, his only concern being that man should rise to the true dignity for which Allâh had made him. This anxiety was not only for those who were directly addressed by him, but, as the context shows, it was as deep for another people, who attributed a son to the Divine Being, and whom outward finery was to mislead to such an extent as to make them strangers to spiritual truth. Reading the next verse along with this, no doubt is left that the Prophet was shown the earthly embellishments which are so great a trial for Christendom today. The word hadîth means *new* or *recent*, and hence is applied to a *narration* or *announcement* which is new or which gives some new information. It here refers to the Qur'ân.

8a. Verses 7 and 8 direct man's attention to the fact that the finery of this life does not last forever. A dweller in the desert of Arabia, with no sight before his eyes but that of the sands of the desert and bare, rugged hills, could not imagine the earth being embellished. The picture drawn here is evidently of the beautiful cities of the modern age, with all their attractions and luxuries, which so engross men that they neither pay attention to the preaching of truth nor to the pursuit of righteousness. Yet where there is growth there is decay, and those who indulge in luxuries do not escape ruin; it is their ruin that is indicated in the words *dust, without herbage*. We have already seen how clearly the Qur'ân states that a severe punishment would overtake the world and destroy populous towns: *There is not a town but We will destroy it before the day of Resurrection or chastise it with a severe chastisement* (17:58); see 17:58a. The earth will be first beautified to its utmost, we are told here, and then laid waste, by man's own hands, lofty buildings being reduced to dust and beautiful gardens being turned into bare earth without any herbage on it. All prophecies made known through the righteous servants of Allâh, the prophets of the Old Testament and "Jesus Christ", and then through the Qur'ân and the Hadîth, point to world-wide conflicts in the latter days, of nation rising against nation, of great calamities, of destruction of cities on a vast scale. All these things this generation has seen with its own eyes. Science first embellished the earth and science is now turning it into a waste, by its atom bombs and other diabolic inventions. The powerful hand of Allâh is thus seen clearly working in the history of the world.

9a. *Kahf* signifies a cave as well as a place of refuge, and *raqîm* means an inscription or a tablet with a writing upon it. Now *The Cave*, as I have already stated, stands for that peculiar aspect of the Christian religion which finds manifestation in its institution of monkery, this being the distinctive characteristic which it assumed soon after its birth. But what about the Inscription? This word contains a prophetic reference to another aspect of the Christian religion, quite opposed to its first aspect of growth in the *Cave*. *Inscription* (or Advertisement) is, in fact, as prominent a feature of the business activities of the Christian nations of today as the *Cave* was a feature of their religious activities in the early days. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân seems to have chosen the epithets to designate the Christian nations by thus indicating their most prominent characteristics in their early and their latter days. The first and the last conditions of Christianity thus seem to be hinted at in the *Cave* and the *Inscription*.

respectively, *a religion of monkery turned into a religion of business*. As for the story of the dwellers in the *Cave*, see 13a.

10 When the youths sought refuge in the Cave, they said: Our *Rabb*, grant us mercy from Thyself, and provide for us a right course in our affair.

11 So We prevented them from hearing in the Cave for a number of years,^a

12 Then We raised them up that We might know which of the two parties was best able to calculate the time for which they remained.^a

SECTION 2: The Dwellers in the Cave

13 We relate to thee their story with truth. Surely they were youths who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance.^a

11a. The words *darabnâ ‘alâ adhân-i-him* are explained as *mana‘nâ hum al-sam‘a*, i.e., *we prevented them from hearing*. This is Abû ‘Alî al-Husain ibn *Dahâk* ibn Yâsir Baṣrî (Poet’s) explanation, and it is nearest the original sense of the words, for one significance of *daraba* is *sadda*, i.e., *he prevented* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faiḍ Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The *preventing from hearing* is then understood to be equivalent to *causing to sleep*, but the original meaning is favoured by the context, the significance being that these people remained cut off from the rest of the world for a number of years. Thus the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân neither supports the story of these men remaining in the cave for hundreds of years, nor of their being actually in a condition of continuous sleep all this while.

12a. The *raising them up* might signify *raising them up from sleep*, as also *raising them up into a condition of activity*, after their remaining cut off from the world, as stated in the previous verse. What it means with reference to the story itself, or with reference to the history of Christianity, is explained in the second and the third sections.

13a. The memorable story of the “seven sleepers”, with whom *the companions of the Cave and the Inscription* are identified, is a story of the reign of the Emperor Decius. Seven noble youths of Ephesus, it is said, took refuge in a cave to escape Decius’ persecution. But the Emperor, eventually learning this, ordered the entrance to the

cave to be firmly secured with a pile of large stones. It is stated that the youths fell asleep as soon as they were shut up in the cave, and awoke 187 years after this in the reign of Theodosius, when the stones were removed by the slaves of one Adollius to supply building material for some edifice. They then sent one of their number, Jamblicus, to bring food for them from the city, but he was taken to the judge on presenting a coin of the reign of Decius, and thus the youths were discovered. It is related that the Emperor himself saw their radiant faces. This is the account given by Gibbon. But some state that these youths remained in that condition for 375 years.

That there may be a modicum of truth underlying this story is not only most probable, but almost certain, for the story could not otherwise have found such wide prevalence. The story as narrated in the Qur'ân does not credit the unnatural incidents of the above account. It only speaks of some men having taken refuge in a dark cave on account of a religious persecution; where and when it does not state. That is all that is stated in this section of the story, and apparently it seems to be continued in the third, while, according to another view, the third section may be a prophetic description of the later growth of Christianity itself. Taking, however, the first view, what is related in the third section is that, after they had rested for a part of a day, they made arrangements to get their food from outside, and remained in this condition for "a number of years" (verse 11), but were subsequently discovered, and an edifice being built at the mouth of the cave caused their death. It mentions conjectures as to their number and the number of years they remained in the cave, but does not go beyond saying that there were *some* men who remained in the cave for *some* years.

There is another very plausible suggestion that the persons referred to here were Joseph of Arimathaea and some other early Christians, their place of refuge being Glastonbury in England, which on account of its northern position well answers the description of the Cave as given in the Qur'an. According to William of Malmesbury, Joseph of Arimathaea "was sent to Britain by St. Philip, and having received a small island in Somersetshire, there constructed with twisted twigs the first Christian church in Britain, afterwards to become the abbey of Glastonbury. The legend says that his staff planted in the ground became a thorn, flowering twice a year" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Art. "Joseph of Arimathaea"). In the tenth edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica Joseph of Arimathaea is said to have "wandered into Britain in the year 63". "The Glastonbury thorn, which is said to be a distinct variety, was regularly visited by pilgrims until it was destroyed about the Reformation times."

Again we find in the Encyclopaedia Britannica under Glastonbury: "According to the legends which grew up under the care of the monks, the first church of Glastonbury was a little wattled building erected by Joseph of Arimathaea as the leader of the twelve apostles sent over to Britain from Gaul by St. Philip". The legends of the "Holy Grail" again connect the name of Joseph of Arimathaea with Britain. According to one of these the Grail, which was the dish of the last supper, was confined to the care of Joseph, while according to another, "the Grail is said to have followed Joseph to Britain" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Art. "Grail"). All these may be legends, but they are certainly not without an undercurrent of truth. The connection of the name of Joseph of Arimathaea with Britain is the strong central fact underlying them all. What makes it still more significant is the fact that Joseph of Arimathaea, who appears very prominently in the closing scenes of the Gospels, so much so that one Gospel looks upon him as a disciple of Jesus, altogether disappears from the history of Christianity as imaged in the propagandic efforts of the apostles. Does this not show that he had changed the scene of his exertions? May then Joseph of Arimathaea and his companions be taken as being referred to in the story of the *Companions of the Cave and the Inscription*? If an answer could be found in the affirmative, then England could definitely be said to be the *Cave* referred to in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, and the description of the *Cave* given in verse 17 well applies to it; see 17*a*. But even if our answer to that question is in the negative, the story itself is not without a deeper meaning and more statements than one show that there is a reference to the history of Christianity itself in the story.

14 And We strengthened their hearts when they stood up and said: Our *Rabb* is the *Rabb* of the *samâwât* and the earth; we call upon no deity beside Him, for then indeed we should utter an enormity.^a

15 These our people have taken gods beside Him. Why do they not bring clear authority for them? Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allâh?

16 And when you withdraw from them and what they worship save Allâh, take refuge in the Cave; your *Rabb* will spread forth for you of His mercy, and provide for you a profitable course in your affair.

17 And you might see the sun, when it rose, decline from their Cave to the right, and when it set leave them behind on the left, while they were in a wide space thereof.

This is of the signs of Allâh. He whom Allâh guides, he is on the right way; and whom He leaves in error, you will not find for him a friend to guide aright.^a

SECTION 3: The Dwellers in the Cave

18 And thou mightest think them awake while they were asleep, and We turned them about to the right and to the left, with their dog outstretching its paws at the entrance. If thou didst look at them, thou wouldst turn back from them in flight, and thou wouldst be filled with awe because of them.^a

14a. This is to show that the early followers of Christianity were Unitarians.

17a. The verse does not speak of any miraculous change in the sun's course; it does not speak of any change at all. It simply describes the position of the cave, which was so situated that it did not admit sunshine. This could easily happen in a cave with its mouth to the north, situated in the northern hemisphere and above the tropic of cancer. In fact, the description applies to any country in the northern hemisphere north of the tropic of cancer. The whole of Europe thus, in one sense, answers the description of the cave. It is a fact that Christianity spread first in Europe.

19 And thus did We rouse them that they might question each other. A speaker from among them said: How long have you tarried? They said: We have tarried for a day or a part of a day. (Others) said: Your *Rabb* knows best how long you have tarried.^a Now send one of you with this silver (coin) of yours to the city, then let him see what food is purest, and bring you provision from it, and let him behave with gentleness, and not make your case known to anyone.^b

18a. What is related in this section is clearly applicable to the story of the seven sleepers, as also to the later history of Christianity. Taking the first view, the meaning is that the youths, who fled for fear of persecution and betook themselves to a cave, slept for some time with a dog at the door of the cave. The whole scene was rather awe-inspiring; a dark cave, in some distant and uninhabited part of the country, with some men sleeping in it and a dog at the door, would have inspired awe into the heart of a casual looker-on. Applied to the history of Christianity the statement is equally true. In this case it should be borne in mind that *ruqûd* ("asleep") also means *inactive*,

or *stagnant*. Thus *raqada* means *qa'ada, ta'akhkhara*, i.e., *he abstained or held back from the affair* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *Raqadati-l-sûqu* is equivalent to *kasadat*, i.e., *the market became stagnant or dull with respect to traffic* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), and *ruqûd* is the infinitive noun of *raqada*. Similarly *aiqâz* ("awake") is plural of *yaqiz*, which means a man *vigilant, wary, in a state of caution, or a man having his attention much roused* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *Tayaqqaza-li l-amr* means *tanabbaha*, i.e., *he had his attention roused to the affair* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*). The *turning about to the right and to the left*, which signifies an uneasy condition while sleeping, may be used as expressing the activities of a man or a nation. Thus there may be a reference here to the lethargy in which the Christian nations remained for a long time, and to their subsequent going about in the world *to the right and to the left*, i.e., spreading in all directions. It may also be noted that Europeans are generally fond of dogs.

19a. The question and the answer may refer either to the time for which the youths slept or to the centuries of inactivity or tardiness of the Christian nations. A day of a thousand years is spoken of in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân on more occasions than one (see 22:47, etc.), and therefore the word *day*, applied to the history of a nation, may signify a thousand years.

19b. After having been refreshed with sleep, which might have been brought on by the fatigue of the journey, they thought of procuring food for themselves in that solitary cave and sent one of them to the city, and impressed on him that he should be gentle and should not give an inkling of their whereabouts to anyone. In reference to the history of Christianity, the passage may be said to speak of the commercial activities of the Christian nations.

20 For if they prevail against you, they would stone you to death or force you back to their religion, and then you would never succeed.

21 And thus did We make (men) to get knowledge of them,^a that they might know that Allah's promise is true and that the Hour — there is no doubt about it.^b When they disputed among themselves about their affair and said: Erect an edifice over them.^c Their *Rabb* knows best about them. Those who prevailed in their affair said: We shall certainly build a place of worship over them.^d

22 (Some) say: (They were) three, the fourth of them their dog; and (others) say: Five, the sixth of them their dog, making conjectures about the unseen. And (others) say: Seven, and the eighth of them their dog. Say: My *Rabb* best knows their number — none knows them but a few. So contend not in their matter but with an outward contention, and question not any of them concerning them.^a

21a. That is, they would have remained hidden had it not been for the necessities of life, which they had still to procure from the city. It was their going out to purchase food that brought them to the knowledge of the outside world. It is not stated how long they continued in this state: they may have passed some days or months or years, but their daily going out at last made their hiding-place known to others. Comparing this with verse 11, however, we may say that they passed several years in this condition.

21b. The result of their becoming known is described in words which show that they were put to death, because the promise of Allâh as to a future state of life is fully realized only after death.

21c. These words show how their death was brought about: it was by closing the mouth of the cave. This is what is meant by the erection of an edifice over them. The words may also signify the erection of a monument.

21d. The *masjid*, or the *mosque*, is the house of worship of the Muslims in particular, but it may mean any house of worship. The people spoken of here are those *who prevailed in their affair*. This is a later incident, when Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, and the reference here seems to be to the saint-worship which prevailed in Christianity.

SECTION 4: The Qur'ân as a Guidance

23 And say not of anything: I will do that tomorrow,^a

24 Unless Allâh please. And remember your *Rabb* when you forget and say: Maybe my *Rabb* will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this.^a

25 And they remained in their cave three hundred years, and they add nine.^a

22a. This verse and verse 25, coming as they do after the story is finished, show that these are only conjectures of the people with regard to them. Their number and the

number of years during which they remained in the cave are both matters which are said to be only known to Allâh. ‘*Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs* (Companion) is, however, of opinion that the words condemning the first two as conjectures show that the last-mentioned number, i.e., seven, is correct. Who are the people referred to in the concluding words, *any of them*? According to *Jâmi‘ al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur’ân* (Commentary), by Imâm Abû Ja‘far Muḥammad *ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî*, the people of the Book, or the Christians, are referred to here, though they are not expressly mentioned in what has gone before. It is clear from this that it is really the history of Christianity that is dealt with in the story of the Companions of the Cave. Verse 25, which again speaks of the same people who are spoken of here, makes it clear that it is the history of Christianity that is really aimed at.

23a. Though the words are general, there seems to be a special prophetic reference to the Prophet’s Flight and his taking refuge in a cave. He had entirely to trust in Allâh, Who was to bring it about as He thought best for him.

24a. The meaning is that the difficulties which had to be experienced by the dwellers in the cave would be removed from the Prophet’s way. He had to pass only three days in the cave, and though a powerful enemy exerted itself to its utmost, his hiding- place at only a distance of three miles from the city, whither food was conveyed to him, could not be discovered. Or, in *the nearer course* there is a reference to the unprecedented triumph of Islâm, which spread over the whole of Arabia within twenty-three years, and spread from Spain in the west to China in the east within a century, whereas Christianity remained in a state of subjection in its birth-place for three hundred years, as stated in the verse that follows.

25a. Commentators consider this verse as being conjoined to verse 22 with the words *they say* as being understood. But as shown in 22a, the history of Christianity, which runs like an undercurrent in the story of the Companions of the Cave, finds a clear expression now. There is no tradition that the Companions of the Cave remained in the Cave for three hundred years, but Christianity itself remained in a Cave for full three hundred years. It is a fact that Christianity rose to power with the conversion of Constantine, and at the same time it lost its purity with the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which was promulgated in 325 A.D. It is, moreover, now almost agreed that “Jesus Christ” was born five or six years before the reputed date of his birth. Bishop Barnes says in *The Rise of Christianity* that he may have been born in 6–5 B.C. So if he began his ministry at the age of thirty, the Christian religion may be said

to have been born at about 25 A.D., and thus exactly after three hundred years it lost its purity by the promulgation of the Trinitarian doctrine, emerging at the same time as a State religion. Thus it remained in the Cave for three hundred years.

But what does this, the addition of nine years, mean? To reduce solar years to lunar years, three years have to be added to every hundred years, and to the three centuries another nine years are thus added. It is due to this computation that nine years are spoken of as being *added*.

26 Say: Allâh knows best how long they remained. His is the unseen of the heavens and the earth. How clear His sight and His hearing! There is no guardian for them beside Him, and He associates none in His judgment.^a

27 And recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book of your *Rabb*. There is none who can alter His words.^a And thou wilt find no refuge beside Him.

28 And keep yourself with those who call on their *Rabb* morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and let not thine eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world's life. And follow not him whose heart We have made unmindful of Our remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case exceeds due bounds.

29 And say: The Truth is from your *Rabb*; so let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve. Surely We have prepared for the iniquitous a Fire, an enclosure of which will encompass them. And if they cry for water, they are given water like molten brass, scalding their faces.^a Evil the drink! And ill the resting-place!

26a. *Abṣir bi-hî wa asmi'* means *ma abṣara wa asma'a*, or *what a sight He has and what a hearing!* The reference here is to the prophecies of the ultimate triumph of the Prophet and Islâm.

27a. By *kalimat* ("words") are meant here *prophecies*, because it is the prophecy of the Prophet's Flight and his final triumph over his enemies that are referred to here. These prophecies, it is claimed, cannot be altered by men, and they must come to pass, however great the opposing forces.

30 As for those who believe and do good, We waste not the reward of him who does a good work.

31 These it is for whom are Gardens of perpetuity wherein flow rivers; they are adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they wear green robes of fine silk and thick

brocade, reclining therein on raised couches.^a Excellent the recompense! And goodly the resting-place!

SECTION 5: A Parable

32 And set forth to them the parable of two men — for one of them We made two gardens of grapevines, and We surrounded them with date-palms, and between them We made corn-fields.^a

29a. They refused the water of spiritual life in this life, and so they will have no water to quench their thirst in the life after death.

31a. It is after these things that men hanker in this life, but the ornaments and robes of this life are transitory. The righteous, who in this life desire and struggle for only devotional ornaments and moral beauty, find these visible in the after-life. It should, however, be borne in mind that these prophecies were in one sense brought to fulfilment in this very life. The Arabs, whose only wealth consisted of their camels and horses, and whose clothes were made of skins or cloth of rough textures, found the treasures of Rome and Persia laid at their feet, and the bracelets of gold and the silk brocade interwoven with gold, which they had never seen before, were now brought to them in abundance, while the gardens of Mesopotamia and Persia were given to them for a permanent heritage.

32a. The parable — it is clearly called a parable and is not at all a story — set forth here is undoubtedly a parable to illustrate the condition of the Christian and the Muslim nations. The former received an abundance of the wealth of this life, as is indicated by the gardens of the parable, while the latter, though poorer in worldly possessions, were richer in the heavenly blessings of Allah. The former reject the message of Truth, of which the latter are the bearers, and their vaunt is the same as that of the wealthy man in the parable: *I have greater wealth than you, and am mightier in followers* (verse 34).

33 Both these gardens yielded their fruits, and failed not in aught thereof, and We caused a river to gush forth in their midst,

34 And he had fruit. So he said to his companion, while he argued with him: I have greater wealth than thou, and am mightier in followers.

35 And he went into his garden, while he was unjust to himself. He said: I think not that this will ever perish,

36 And I think not the Hour will come; and even if I am returned to my *Rabb*, I will certainly find a returning-place better than this.^a

37 His companion said to him, while arguing with him: Disbelieve you in Him Who created you of dust, then of a small life-germ, then He made you a perfect man?

38 But as for me, He, Allâh, is my Lord, and I associate none with my *Rabb*.

39 And wherefore didst thou not say, when thou enteredst thy garden: It is as Allâh has pleased — there is no power save in Allâh? If you consider me as less than you in wealth and children —

40 Then maybe my *Rabb* will give me better than your garden, and will send on (thine) a reckoning from *samâ'* so that it is dust without plant:

36a. By the “Hour” is meant the hour of doom which must overtake every people who reject the Truth.

41 Or its water will sink down into the ground, so that thou art unable to find it.

42 And his fruit was destroyed; so he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it, while it lay waste, its roofs fallen down,^a and he said: Ah me! would that I had ascribed no partners to my *Rabb*!

43 And he had no host to help him against Allâh, nor could he defend himself.

44 Thus protection is only Allâh's, the True One. He is Best to reward and Best in requiting.

SECTION 6: The Guilty are brought to Judgment

45 And set forth to them the parable of the life of this world as water which We send down from the cloud, so the herbage of the earth becomes luxuriant thereby, then it becomes dry, broken into pieces which the winds scatter. And Allâh is the Holder of power over all things.

46 Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; but the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with your *Rabb* in reward and better in hope.

47 And the day when We cause the mountains to pass away, and thou seest the earth a levelled plain and We gather them together and leave none of them behind.^a

42a. Here we have an exact description of the havoc that is being wrought in the world before our eyes.

48 And they are brought before your *Rabb* in ranks. Now certainly you have come to Us as We created you at first. Nay, you thought that We had not made an appointment for you.

49 And the book is placed, and you see the guilty fearing for what is in it, and they say: O woe to us! What a book is this! It leaves out neither a small thing nor a great one, but numbers them (all), and they find what they did confronting them. And your *Rabb* wrongs not anyone.^a

SECTION 7: **Their Helplessness**

50 And when We said to the *malâ'ikah*: Make submission to Âdam, they submitted except Iblîs. He was of the jinn, so he transgressed the commandment of his *Rabb*.^a Will you then take him and his offspring for friends rather than Me, and they are your enemies? Evil is the exchange for the unjust.

51 I made them not to witness the creation of the *samâwât* and the earth, nor their own creation. Nor could I take those who mislead for aiders.

52 And one day He will say: Call on those whom you considered to be My partners. So they will call on them, but they will not answer them, and We shall cause a separation between them.^a

47a. Making the earth a levelled plain indicates the removal of all those mighty obstacles which stood in the way of the advancement of Truth, and these are the mountains which are made to pass away; see 20:105a.

49a. This comprehensive book is the same as is spoken of in 17:13, 14: “And We have made every man’s actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. Read thy book. Your own *nafs* is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day”. There is not the slightest action, good or bad, which does not leave its effect behind.

50a. *Iblîs* is one of the *jinn* or the evil inclination, so it is an error to take him for a *malak* or a good being. The essence of evil is always rebellious, and it is against this that man is warned, so that he should resist every evil tendency.

53 And the guilty will see the Fire, and know that they are about to fall into it, and they will find no escape from it.

SECTION 8: Warning is disregarded

54 And certainly We have made distinct in this Qur'ân for mankind every kind of description; and man is in most things contentious.

55 And nothing prevents men from believing when the guidance comes to them, and from asking forgiveness of their *Rabb*, but that (they wait) for the way of the ancients to overtake them, or that the chastisement should confront them.

56 And We send not messengers but as givers of good news and warning, and those who disbelieve contend with falsehood to weaken thereby the Truth, and they take My messages and the warning for a mockery.

57 And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the messages of his *Rabb*, then he turns away from them and forgets what his hands have sent before? Surely We have placed veils over their hearts, lest they understand it, and a deafness in their ears.^a And if you call them to the guidance, they will even then never follow the right course.

52a. *Bain* has three significances, viz., *disunion*, *union*, and *between* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), and *maubiq* means *perdition* or *separation*, or *fatal enmity* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*).

57a. It is when man becomes as iniquitous as to turn away from the truth and so callous as not to care for the evil that he does that a veil is placed over his heart.

58 And your *Rabb* is Forgiving, Full of mercy. Were He to punish them for what they earn, He would certainly hasten the chastisement for them. But for them there is an appointed time from which they will find no refuge.^a

59 And these towns — We destroyed them when they did wrong. And We have appointed a time for their destruction.^a

SECTION 9: Mûsâ travels in Search of Knowledge

60 And when Mûsâ said to his servant:^a I will not cease until I reach the junction of the two rivers,^b otherwise I will go on for years.^c

61 So when they reached the junction of the two (rivers), they forgot their fish, and it took its way into the river, being free.^a

58a. According to *Kashshâf* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Qâsim Maḥmûd ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharî, the appointed time referred to is the battle of Badr. But Truth is one and the same for all ages, and we see signs of the doom of the latter-day opposition to Islam clearly approaching.

59a. The personal pronoun *their* refers to the opponents of Truth, earlier as well as later.

60a. Some reports give his name as Joshua, the son of Nûn, the man who afterwards appears so prominently in the history of Israel.

The incidents narrated in the ninth and the tenth sections may be the actual experience of Mûsâ or this journey may simply be an Ascension of Mûsâ, like the Ascension of the Holy Prophet, referred to in the last chapter. What is stated in the next section makes the latter view more probable.

60b. The words *Majma‘ al-Bahrain* have been misunderstood generally. It should be borne in mind that Moses lived in Egypt for forty years, and the junction of the two rivers is no other than the junction of the two great branches of the Nile at Khartoum. That the story of this journey of Moses is not found in the Bible or even in Rabbinical literature is no argument against it. Rabbinical literature relates things about Moses which give us strong reason to believe that such a journey was very probably undertaken by him. South of Egypt was the Kingdom of Ethiopia, whose southern boundary reached Khartoum, or the junction of the two Niles, and various accounts met with both in Rabbinical and Hellenistic literature (see *Jewish Encyclopaedia*) agree that Moses went to Ethiopia. According to one of these accounts, he became king of Ethiopia by reason of his great prowess in having defeated an enemy, and

married the king's widow. This is corroborated to some extent by the statement in the Bible that "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married" (Numbers 12:1). Hence a journey to Khartoum, which was near the southern boundary of Ethiopia, made in search of knowledge, is most probable. The person to whom Mûsâ went was *Khadir* (Bukhârî 3:44). Some commentators, however, do not take the words *Majma' al-Bahrain* literally, taking the meaning to be the union of the rivers of human and Divine knowledge. I would, however, suggest that if we accept this journey in the light of an Ascension, it would be an indication of the limitation of the Mosaic dispensation. Mûsâ's going on for years until he reached the *Majma' al-Bahrain* would mean that the Mûsâic dispensation would see its termination after a time, the new dispensation taking its place being one which was to be guided by a prophet who is described here as being the *Majma' al-Bahrain*, i.e., the union of the two seas of human and Divine knowledge, or one in whom the temporal and the devotional would find their highest manifestation, such being the Holy Prophet Muḥammad.

62 But when they had gone further, he said to this servant: Bring to us our morning meal, certainly we have found fatigue in this our journey.

63 He said: Sawest thou when we took refuge on the rock, I forgot the fish, and none but the devil made me forget to speak of it, and it took its way into the river; what a wonder!^a

64 He said: This is what we sought for. So they returned retracing their footsteps.

65 Then they found one of Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.

60c. *Huqub* signifies *a long time*, or *a year* or *seventy years* or *eighty years* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

61a. The loss of the fish was, according to a report, to serve as a sign that the goal had been attained (Bukhârî 3:44). There is nothing either in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân or in the *Hadîth* to show, however, that this was a roasted fish.

63a. The taking refuge on the rock shows that they were staying at a place which was flooded by the river, and Mûsâ's companion, when hastening for refuge, forgot to take the fish along with him. The wonder is not expressed at the fish having gone down into the river, but because he had forgotten to mention the loss to Mûsâ.

66 Mûsâ said to him: May I follow thee that thou mayest teach me of the good thou hast been taught?

67 He said: You can not have patience with me.

68 And how can you have patience in that whereof you have not a comprehensive knowledge?

69 He said: If Allâh please, you will find me patient, nor shall I disobey you in aught.

70 He said: If you would follow me, question me not about aught until I myself speak to you about it.

SECTION 10: Mûsâ travels in Search of Knowledge

71 So they set out until, when they embarked in a boat, he made a hole in it. (Moses) said: Have you made a hole in it to drown its occupants? You have surely done a grievous thing.

72 He said: Did I not say that you could not have patience with me?

73 He said: Blame me not for what I forgot, and be not hard upon me for what I did.

74 So they went on, until, when they met a boy, he slew him. (Mûsâ) said: Hast thou slain an innocent person, not guilty of slaying another? You have indeed done a horrible thing.

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75 He said: Did I not say to you that you could not have patience with me?

76 He said: If I ask you about anything after this, keep not company with me. You will then indeed have found an excuse in my case.

77 So they went on, until, when they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to entertain them as guests. Then they found in it a wall which was on the point of falling, so he put it into a right state. (Mûsâ) said: If you had wished, you could have taken a recompense for it.

78 He said: This is the parting between me and you. Now I will inform you of the significance of that with which you could not have patience.^a

79 As for the boat, it belonged to poor people working on the river, and I intended to damage it, for there was behind them a king who seized every boat by force.

78a. The interpretation of the three incidents shows a manifestation of Divine wisdom in what takes place in the everyday life of man. Divine laws, as manifested in nature, are really working towards ultimate good, though sometimes they may appear to the outward eye to be working to the detriment of somebody. The beneficent hand of Allâh that works in nature is always directing humanity to the goal of great good, though that goal must necessarily be reached with apparent loss. Sometimes the loss is only apparent, as in the case of making a hole in the boat; there was no real loss, but the apparent loss served a great purpose and brought much benefit to the owner. The second instance is that in which there is real loss to a person, but it is for the good of humanity at large, for life must be sacrificed for the ultimate good of humanity. The third instance shows that, for the good of humanity, deeds must be done which bring no immediate reward, and that good done by one generation is not devoid of benefit to the next. Mûsâ himself had, in fact, to undergo the experience of his teacher, and the incidents seem no more than prophetic allegories of Mûsâ's own life-work. Just as the scuttling of a boat causes apprehension to the safety of its occupants, Mûsâ had to lead his people to a place where they thought they had only been brought to be drowned; but their safe passage through the sea showed that it was for their good. Then he had to order his men to fight against an iniquitous people and to put them to death, but he was not shedding human blood to no purpose, for it was really a step towards the evolution of a better race. And finally, his devoting his own life to the Isrâ'îlites, descendants of a righteous man, corresponded to his teacher's building the wall for the orphans without claiming recompense. Read in this light, the narration is clearly an Ascension of Mûsâ, foreshadowing the great events which were to befall him.

80 And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should involve them in wrongdoing and disbelief.^a

81 So we intended that their *Rabb* might give them in his place one better in purity and nearer to mercy.

82 And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father had been a righteous man. So your *Rabb* intended that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure — a mercy from your *Rabb* — and I did not do it of my own accord. This is the significance of that with which you could not have patience.

SECTION 11: Dhu-l-qarnain and Gog and Magog

83 And they ask you about Dhu-l-qarnain. *a* Say: I will recite to you an account of him.

84 Truly We established him in the land and granted him means of access to everything;

85 So he followed a course.

80a. That the youth himself deserved death is abundantly clear. His inordinacy had now reached an extreme — the circumstances seem to have been known to Khadir, though not to Mûsâ — when it was feared that his innocent parents would be involved in the trouble which must befall him as a result of his wrongdoing. Note that the word used to indicate the youth's wrongdoing is *tughyân*, which means *exceeding all limits in wrongdoing*.

83a. The word *qarn* means a *horn*, as also a *generation* or a *century*, and Dhu-l-qarnain therefore literally means *the two-horned one*, or *one belonging to two generations* or *two centuries*. The reference here seems to be to the two-horned ram of Daniel's vision (Daniel 8:3), which he interpreted as the Kingdoms of Media and Persia, which were combined into a single kingdom under one ruler, Cyrus, who is erroneously called Darius in the Bible (Encyclopaedia Biblica and Jewish Encyclopaedia, Art. "Darius"). The reference in Daniel's vision is, however, not to Cyrus but to Darius I Hystaspes (521-485 B.C.), "who allowed the Jews to rebuild their temple, and is referred to in Ezra 4:5, 24; 5:5; 6:1; Haggai 1:1; 2:10; Zechariah 1:7, and probably in Nehemiah 12:22. His liberality towards the Jews is in complete accord with what we know otherwise of his general policy in religious matters towards the subject nations" (En. Bib. "Darius"). That "the two-horned ram" of Daniel's vision is the king of Media and Persia is made plain in Daniel's book, where the interpretation of the dream is given in the following words: "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the Kings of Media and Persia" (Daniel 8:20). The reference in the Qur'an in the history of Dhu-l-qarnain is to Darius I: "Darius was the organizer of the Persian Empire. His conquests served to round off the boundaries of his realm in Armenia, the Caucasus, and India, and along the Turanian steppes and the highlands of Central Asia" (Jewish Encyclopaedia, "Darius I"). The following remarks in the Encyclopaedia Britannica strengthen this view: "Darius in his

inscriptions appears as a fervent believer in the true religion of Zoroaster. But he was also a great statesman and organizer. The time of conquests had come to an end; the wars which Darius undertook, like those of Augustus, only served the purpose of gaining strong natural frontiers for the empire and keeping down the barbarous tribes on its borders. Thus Darius subjugated the wild nations of the Pontic and Armenian mountains, and extended the Persian dominion to the Caucasus; for the same reason he fought against the Sacae and other Turanian tribes". The references in this quotation to Darius being a fervent believer in the true religion of Zoroaster, to his subduing the barbarous tribes on the borders, to his gaining strong natural frontiers for the empire, and to his fighting against the Sacae clearly point him out as the Dhu-l-qarnain of the Qur'ân.

86 Until, when he reached the setting- place of the sun,^a he found it going down into a black sea,^b and found by it a people. We said: O Dhu-l-qarnain, either punish them or do them a benefit.

87 He said: As for him who is unjust, we shall chastise him, then he will be returned to his *Rabb*, and He will chastise him with an exemplary chastisement.

88 And as for him who believes and does good, for him is a good reward, and We shall speak to him an easy word of Our command.^a

86a. *Maghrib al-shams*, or *the setting-place of the sun*, signify the western-most point of his empire, because going towards the west he could not go beyond it.

86b. The words in Arabic are '*ain-in hami*'*at-in*, which literally mean a *black sea*, '*ain* meaning an *abundance of water*, or a place in which water remains and collects, and *hamiat* means *black mud* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The place referred to is no other than the Black Sea, as, Armenia being within the Kingdom of Persia, the Black Sea formed the north-western boundary of the empire.

89 Then he followed a course.

90 Until, when he reached (the land of) the rising sun, he found it rising on a people to whom We had given no shelter from it^a—

91 So it was. And We had full knowledge of what he had.

92 Then he followed a course.

93 Until, when he reached (a place) between the two mountains, he found on that side of them a people who could hardly understand a word.^a

94 They said: O Dhu-l-qarnain, Gog and Magog do mischief in the land. May we then pay thee tribute on condition that thou raise a barrier between us and them?^a

95 He said: That wherein my *Rabb* has established me is better, so if only you help me with strength (of men), I will make a fortified barrier between you and them:

88a. Being a true follower of Zoroaster, the well-known Persian prophet, Darius seems to have invited these tribes to his religion.

90a. The three journeys alluded to seem to have been undertaken with the object of strengthening the frontiers of the empire, the most important of these being that spoken of in verse 93, the part of the frontier between the Caspian and the Black Seas, where the Caucasus afforded a natural protection against the attacks of the Scythians. Darius goes first westward to the Black Sea (verses 85, 86). Then he undertakes an eastward journey — the land of the rising sun. The description of the people found here, a people who had no shelter from the sun, is a description of the barbarous aboriginal tribes on the shores of the Caspian. The Encyclopaedia Britannica says in the article on Media: “The names in the Assyrian inscriptions prove that the tribes in the Zagros and the northern parts of Media were not Iranians nor Indo-Europeans, but an aboriginal population, like the early inhabitants of Armenia, perhaps connected with the numerous tribes of the Caucasus. We can see how the Iranian element gradually became dominant: princes with Iranian names occasionally occur as the rulers of these tribes. But the Galae, Tapuri, Cadusii, Amardi, Utii, and other tribes in Northern Media and on the shores of the Caspian, were not Iranians”.

93a. The two mountains are the mountains of Armenia and Azarbaijan. The people settling there spoke a different language and could not understand the Iranian language.

94a. This verse brings us face to face with an all-important subject, viz., the identity of Gog and Magog. The Bible references to Gog and Magog are somewhat loose. In Genesis 10:2 and 1 Chronicles 1:5, “Magog is mentioned as the second son of Japheth, between Gomer and Madai, Gomer representing the Cimmerians and Madai the Medes. Magog must be a people located east of the Cimmerians and west of the Medes. But in the list of nations, Genesis 10, the term connotes rather the complex of barbarian peoples dwelling at the extreme north and north-east of the geographical

survey covered by that chapter. ... In Ezekiel 38:2 Magog occurs as the name of a country; in Ezekiel 39:6 as that of a northern people, the leader of whom is Gog” (Jewish Encyclopaedia, Art. “Gog and Magog”). “Josephus identifies them with the Scythians, a name which among the classical writers stands for a number of unknown ferocious tribes. According to Jerome, Magog was situated beyond the Caucasus near the Caspian Sea” (Jewish Encyclopaedia). The Encyclopaedia Britannica considers the traditional identification of Gog and Magog with the Scythians to be “plausible”, and then adds: “This plausible opinion has been generally followed”, with this reservation, that the word may be applied to “any or all of the numerous but partially known tribes of the north; and any attempt to assign a more definite locality to Magog can only be very hesitatingly made”. All these writers have, however, not paid sufficient attention to the words of Ezekiel 38:2: “Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”. Tubal and Meshech are almost always mentioned together, and their identification has been a task of great difficulty, so much so that a renowned Biblical critic suggests the names of certain nations in South Palestine. But this contradicts the views of ancient writers like Josephus, who settle the Magog north of the Caucasus. If we go, however, to the north of the Caucasus, we find still two rivers bearing the names of Tobal and Moskoa, on the latter of which is situated the ancient city of Moscow, and on the former the more recent town of Tobolsk. It seems almost certain that these two rivers received their names from the two tribes of Ezekiel 38:2, the Tubal and Meshech, and then gave their names to the two above-mentioned cities, thus keeping the names of these tribes. This view is in accordance with the opinion of Josephus, who identifies Magog with the Scythians, for “throughout classical literature Scythia generally meant all regions to the north and north-east of the Black Sea, and a Scythian any barbarian coming from these parts”.

It is clear from the above that the name Magog stands for tribes which occupied territories to the north and north-east of the Black Sea, tribes which gave their names directly or indirectly to the towns of Tobolsk and Moscow.

There is, however, another point worth considering, and that is the gigantic effigies of Gog and Magog in Guildhall, London. “It is known,” says the Encyclopaedia Britannica, “that effigies similar to the present existed in London as early as the time of Henry V”. An explanation of this remarkable circumstance is given by Geoffrey of Monmouth: “Gaemot or Gaemagot (probably a corrupted form of Gog and Magog) was a giant who, along with his brother Gorineous, tyrannized in the western horn of

England until slain by foreign invaders” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Art. “Gog and Magog”). It is very difficult to speak with anything bordering on accuracy about the early connections of different races, but the preservation of the effigies of Gog and Magog in England, which can be traced to a very early period in English history, makes it probable that the Angles or the Saxons had in very ancient times some connection with the Scythians or other tribes living north of the Caucasus or the Black Sea. The relations of the different nations in early history are very complicated, and it is out of place to enter into any such discussion here. But it may be noted that the Goths, who are considered to be the easternmost of the Teutonic races, are said to have migrated into Scythia (Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Goths”), which shows the existence of connection between the two races. And again, “the Batharnae also, who in the third century B.C. invaded and settled in the regions between the Carpathians and the Black Sea, are said by several ancient writers to have been Teutonic by origin, though they had largely intermarried with the native inhabitants” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Teutonic Peoples”).

It is thus clear that the ancestors of the present Teutonic and Slav races are the Gog and Magog spoken of in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. The effigies of Gog and Magog in London and the names of Tobal and Moskoa, occurring in the Bible, are clear indications of this fact.

Next we come to the statement that the tribes found by Darius between Azerbaijan and the Armenian mountains were constantly harassed by their northern neighbours, the Scythians. History bears evidence to the truth of this statement. The Scythians, or, according to some writers, the Sacae, constantly troubled Asia. According to Herodotus the Scyths ruled Media for twenty-eight years (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Art. “Scythia”). “About 512 Darius undertook a war against the Scythians ... The purpose of this war can only have been to attack the nomadic Turanian tribes in the rear, and *thus to secure peace on the northern frontier of the empire*” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Art. “Darius”). The portion which I give in italics shows that Darius exerted himself to his utmost in securing peace on the northern frontier of his empire, where the Caucasus, bounded on both sides by the Black and Caspian Seas, afforded a natural protection.

The barrier referred to in this verse, and described in the verses that follow, is the famous wall at Derbent (Arabic *Darband*). An account of this wall is given by Muslim geographers and historians, for instance, in *Marasid al-Ittila’* and *Ibn al-*

Faqîh. The following account, however, taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, should be more convincing: “Derbent or *Darband*, a town of Caucasia, in the province of Daghestan, on the western shore of the Caspian ... It occupies a narrow strip of land beside the sea, from which it climbs up the steep heights inland ... And to the south lies the seaward extremity of the Caucasian wall (50 miles long), otherwise known as Alexander’s Wall, blocking up the narrow pass of the Iron Gate or Caspian Gate (*Portae Albanæ*, or *Portae Caspæ*). This, when entire, had a height of 29 feet and a thickness of about 10 feet, and with *its iron gates* and numerous watch-towers formed a *valuable defence of the Persian frontier*.” (Italics in the last sentence are mine, for which see the next footnote.) The misnomer *Alexander’s Wall* seems to have been due to the mistake made by Muslim historians in supposing Dhu-l-qarnain to be Alexander.

96 Bring me blocks of iron.^a At length, when he had filled up the space between the two mountain sides, he said, Blow. Till, when he had made it (as) fire, he said: Bring me molten brass to pour over it.

97 So they were not able to scale it, nor could they make a hole in it.

98 He said: This is a mercy from my *Rabb*, but when the promise of my *Rabb* comes to pass He will crumble it, and the promise of my *Rabb* is ever true.^a

96a. The blocks of iron were needed for the iron gates in the wall, for which see the concluding lines of the last note.

98a. From the historical narration of the past, the subject is now changed to the future. Gog and Magog are described as two nations, and after describing the history of these nations, whose depredations on peaceful nations were brought to an end by Darius, we are now told that Gog and Magog will again be let loose in the latter days. In fact, this is clearly foretold in another chapter of the same period: “when Gog and Magog are let loose, and they sally forth from every elevated place” (21:96). This is the only other occasion on which Gog and Magog are spoken of in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. The crumbling of the wall which withheld Gog and Magog for a time is thus explained by the Qur’ân itself, as the letting loose of Gog and Magog. Just as the building of the wall indicated the confinement of Gog and Magog to their own territorial bounds, the crumbling of the wall means that they will at some future time be let loose and they will then dominate the whole world. This domination is spoken

of in the Hadîth in various ways. According to one hadîth, “No one will have the power to fight against them” (*Sahîh Muslim* (Hadîth), by Imâm Abu-l-Husain ibn Al-Hajjâj 52:20). According to another, “they will drink the water of the whole world” (*Kanaz al-‘Ummâl fî Sunani-l-Aqwâl wa-l-Af‘âl* (Hadîth), by Al-Shaikh ‘Alâ al-Dîn ‘Alî al-Muttaqî, vol. 7, p. 2157). According to a third, Allâh said: “I have created some of My servants whom no one can destroy but Myself ” (*Kanaz al-‘Ummâl fî Sunani-l-Aqwâl wa-l-Af‘âl* (Hadîth), by Al-Shaikh ‘Alâ al-Dîn ‘Alî al-Muttaqî, p. 3021). As shown in 94a, the ancestors of Gog and Magog are the Slav and Teutonic races, and in the world-domination of Gog and Magog is thus clearly hinted the domination of the European nations over the whole world, and the prophecy has thus found fulfilment in our days.

99 And on that day We shall let some of them surge against others and the trumpet will be blown, then We shall gather them all together,^a

100 And We shall bring forth hell, exposed to view, on that day before the disbelievers,^a

99a. A mighty conflict of the nations is clearly spoken of here, and the words no doubt refer to some catastrophe like that which is predicted in the Gospels in the words: “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:7, 8).

The Qur’ân makes it clear that the reference in nation rising against nation is to the great European conflicts which we are witnessing nowadays. Gog and Magog, or the European nations, having subdued the whole world, could not agree on the division of the spoils, and they are rushing at one another’s throats, and the whole world being subject to them, their struggle has assumed the form of a world conflict. One World-War ends only to be followed by another. But if the first part of the verse speaks of the destruction due to these wars, the second part raises a great hope. Will this great world conflict bring the world to an end? Human efforts to restore the balance to the world are a failure. But the Qur’ân tells us that a mighty Revolution will come about. That is what is meant by the *blowing of the trumpet*. This revolution will be a change in the mentality of the nations. A silver lining is introduced in this dark picture by the words, *then We shall gather them all together*. The revolution

would unite them; it would drive them to one common faith. Material benefits having turned man into the enemy of man, a spiritual awakening will, we are told, be brought about which will change the world entirely. Instead of cutting one another's throats men will learn to love one another, and they will all be but one nation. There is a broad enough hint here at the nation of Islam, for there is but one faith, the faith of Islam, which has been able to weld diverse people into one whole. The day of peace for this world will dawn with the dawning of the idea on the mind of man that there is only a single nation, the human nation that lives on this earth: "Mankind is a single nation" (2:213). And actually Islâm is the only way of life as prescribed by Allâh in the world which has been successful in uniting different nations into one whole and in obliterating distinctions of race and colour.

101 Whose eyes were under a cover from My Reminder, and they could not bear to hear.^a

SECTION 12: Christian Nations

102 Do those who disbelieve think that they can take My servants to be friends besides Me?^a Surely We have prepared hell as an entertainment for the disbelievers.

103 Say: Shall We inform you who are the greatest losers in respect of deeds?

104 Those whose effort goes astray in this world's life, and they think that they are making good manufactures.^a

105 Those are they who disbelieve in the messages of their *Rabb* and meeting with Him, so their works are vain. Nor shall We set up a balance for them on the day of Resurrection.^a

100a. These words complete the picture of the great conflict spoken of in the previous verse. It in fact describes the severity of the conflict; it will reduce the world to a veritable hell. We have seen hell raging on this earth in World-War II. What World-War III may bring, no one can say.

101a. The reason is given in these words why these disasters will be brought on human beings: These are people *whose eyes are under a cover from My Reminder*.

Nay, they are so estranged from Allâh that they cannot even *bear to hear* His Reminder. So thoroughly have lust and greed engrossed the civilized world!

102a. The Christians are meant here, because theirs is the most prominent example of having taken a servant of Allâh, a prophet, for God. In fact, “Jesus Christ” is the only person whom the Qur’ân recognizes as a righteous servant of Allâh and who has been taken for God by nearly half the world.

104a. This is a clear description of the present attitude of the civilized nations to their moral and spiritual needs — their effort is entirely wasted in this world’s life, and they cannot give a moment’s consideration to the life after death. The portrait of the material civilization, to which Christianity has led, as drawn in this section, attains to its most vivid clearness in these words. Manufacture is the one speciality and pride of the West. But they are so engrossed in the contest of manufactures that they have no thought of God left in their minds. Production and more production that is the be-all and end-all of life with them.

106 That is their reward — hell, because they disbelieved and held My messages and My messengers in mockery.

107 As for those who believe and do good deeds, for them are Gardens of Paradise, an entertainment,

108 To abide therein; they will not desire removal there-from.

109 Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my *Rabb*, the sea would surely be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, though We brought the like of it to add (thereto).^a

110 Say: I am only a mortal like you — it is revealed to me that your Deity is one Deity. So whoever hopes to meet his *Rabb*, he should do good deeds, and join no one in the service of his *Rabb*.

105a. Their works are vain because what they do relates to the vanities of life. They have no vision for the higher values of life, for the ultimate end, which is here spoken of as the *meeting with the Rabb*. Hence we are told that no balance will be set up for them on the day of Resurrection, because all their deeds relate to this life, and end where this life ends.

109a. In these words there is a refutation of the Christian doctrine that “the word was with God”, or that “the word was God” (John 1:1). The words of God are so numerous, we are here told, that the sea would be exhausted, if it were to serve as ink for writing them. In fact, everything created is a word of Allâh according to the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân, and things created know no end.